WORLD AGRICULTURAL WEATHER HIGHLIGHTS

March 8, 2001

1 - UNITED STATES
During February, storm systems continued to bypass the snow-deficient Northwest, instead crossing southern California and the Southwest. Spring runoff and summer water-supply prospects improved in the Sierra Nevada, but worsened from the Cascades to the northern Rockies. Farther east, wet weather prevailed from the central and southern Plains to the Great Lakes region, causing lowland flooding and leaving standing water in some winter wheat fields. Heavy rain fell as far east as the Tennessee and lower Mississippi Valleys, but dry conditions prevailed just to the south, including areas from southern Texas to the southern Atlantic region. Drought-stricken Florida remained especially dry, maintaining heavy citrus irrigation requirements. Meanwhile, the return of bitterly cold weather increased livestock stress across the northern Plains and deeply snow-covered western Corn Belt. Warm weather across the South spurred pasture and winter grain growth.

2 - SOUTH AMERICA
In central Argentina, dry weather during mid- to late-February reduced topsoil moisture for summer crops, but subsoil moisture was adequate due to plentiful January and early February rainfall. The dryness was alleviated by widespread early March rainfall. In southern Cordoba, below-normal rainfall reduced soil moisture for filling corn. In southern Brazil, near- to above-normal February rainfall maintained favorable soil moisture for filling soybeans across the major growing areas. However, below-normal February rainfall across most of Minas Gerais and Bahia reduced moisture supplies for summer crops and cocoa.

3 - EUROPE
In February, unseasonably mild weather maintained favorable overwintering conditions for dormant winter grains. Although cold weather occasionally spread over northeastern Europe, snow cover protected winter grains from potential winterkill. In the western Iberian peninsula, frequent rainfall increased reservoir levels, but hampered fieldwork and caused flooding. Above- normal precipitation kept topsoils too wet in southern England and the Benelux countries. Precipitation in southeastern Europe improved moisture supplies locally, but widespread rain is needed to end the drought.

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(More details are available in the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin. Subscription information may be obtained by calling (202) 720-7917.)

4 - FSU-WESTERN
In February, overwintering conditions remained favorable for dormant winter grains. Above-normal precipitation eased long-term dryness and boosted moisture reserves in Ukraine and southern Russia and provided an unusually deep snow cover in northern Russia. Since early March, unseasonably mild weather in Ukraine and southern Russia melted snow cover.

5 - NORTHWESTERN AFRICA
In February, most areas received below-normal precipitation, decreasing available soil moisture for winter grains. Well below-normal precipitation along with above-normal temperatures significantly depleted available soil moisture in Morocco, especially in the south.

6 - MIDDLE EAST AND TURKEY
Warmer- and drier-than-normal weather continued to dominate the winter wheat areas of central Turkey and Iran, inducing early greening and increasing early crop moisture demands. Above-normal precipitation in eastern Turkey improved summer irrigation potential along the Tigris and Euphrates river systems.

7 - SOUTH ASIA
In February, unseasonably warm, dry weather created unfavorable conditions for rainfed winter grains and oilseeds. Showers in eastern India and Bangladesh boosted irrigation reserves for winter-grown rice.

8 - EASTERN ASIA
During February, above-normal precipitation continued to boost moisture supplies for winter crops across the North China Plain. In this region, warmer weather caused winter wheat to begin losing winter hardiness by late February. Across the Yangtze Valley and southern China, scattered rainfall provided some moisture for winter crops and sugarcane, but more rain will be needed as the growing season progresses.

9 - SOUTHEAST ASIA
In February, seasonably warm, dry weather continued in Thailand, while cooler, wetter conditions prevailed in Vietnam. Flooding remained problematic throughout the eastern Philippines, where above-normal rainfall occurred. Java, Indonesia received near- to below-normal precipitation, reducing available moisture for rice. Near- to above-normal rainfall benefited oil palm in peninsular Malaysia.

10 - AUSTRALIA
Recent showers in New South Wales caused some concern for maturing cotton. Since mid-February, unseasonably heavy rain in Western Australia has increased moisture reserves for immature summer crops and grazing.

11 - SOUTH AFRICA
In mid-February, widespread, soaking rain stabilized conditions for reproductive to filling corn and other summer crops. Warmth and dryness in the southwest increased irrigation demands of orchards, vineyards, and vegetables.